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Soviet Missiles Defend Syria From U.S. Fleet

During the Lebanese civil war, the U.S. Sixth Fleet appeared off Lebanon in imposing array. Carrier planes and the USS New Jersey's big guns pounded Syrian positions with virtual impunity.

This caused consternation in the Kremlin, intelligence sources told my associate Lucette Lagnado. Though the Lebanon intervention ultimately ended in failure for the United States, the Soviets learned a lesson from the U.S. power play.

Now they have reportedly taken measures to counter the threat posed by the Sixth Fleet. Classified intelligence reports indicate that the Kremlin has provided Syria with long-range, surface-to-surface missiles capable of blowing U.S. warships out of the water.

Pentagon sources have identified the missiles as the latest and most sophisticated in the Soviet arsenal: "shore-to-sea missiles, with a flat trajectory like the cruise missile," a 150-mile range and a short reaction time. They have just been deployed along the Syrian coast.

This means that any craft in the eastern Mediterranean can be sunk.

"In naval warfare, reaction time is what really counts," one well-

placed source explained. "This missile gives the Sixth Fleet very limited reaction time." Earlier, the Soviets also rushed to Syria several SS21s, with a 75-mile range and a 15-minute reaction time.

According to a Pentagon report, the SS21 is a ground-to-ground missile "mounted on a transporter-erector-launcher," which gives it mobility. Even more ominous, "the missile payload may consist of a low-yield nuclear, chemical or [conventional] warhead."

The anti-ship missiles will make any replay of the Sixth Fleet's show of strength extremely risky. The system, meanwhile, gives the Syrians a weapon that can be used not only defensively but offensively.

Tilting at Lance: Republicans were delighted with Walter F. Mondale's appointment of Bert Lance as his general campaign chairman. They hope it will co-opt any Democratic attempt to make the so-called "sleaze factor" an issue.

One Reagan administration scandal the Democrats hoped to use was the Securities and Exchange Commission case against W. Paul Thayer, who resigned as deputy defense secretary in the face of charges that he had illegally given "insider" information on stocks to friends. Thayer denied the charges.

Lance has been identified as a beneficiary of one Thayer tip. He was one of several investors who purchased a total of 106,000 shares in Campbell Taggart shortly before

it was taken over by the Busch conglomerate. They paid \$25 to \$30 a share, and Busch offered to buy the stock at \$36 a share.

According to SEC documents seen by my associate Tony Capaccio, Lance was not one of the Thayer group that got the inside information directly. As SEC probers pieced it together, Thayer called Busch Chairman August Busch III on July 6, 1982, and allegedly discussed the Campbell Taggart situation. The same day, the investigators say, he called Billy Bob Harris, a Dallas securities broker.

The next day or so, according to SEC documents, Harris "improperly disclosed" information on the takeover to William (Billy) Mathis, an Atlanta securities broker. Mathis allegedly bought 38,800 shares of Campbell Taggart, which he then sold for a \$146,829 profit.

Mathis "also improperly disclosed" the inside information to "other persons who then purchased CTI stock," the SEC charges. One of those was Lance, who "purchased substantial amounts of CTI stock based on discussions with Mathis," according to the SEC.

Though there is no evidence to suggest that Lance knew the advice from Mathis was tainted, the SEC documents make clear that Lance is a potential witness in the case.

Mathis, through his Washington attorney, declined to comment. Lance ignored repeated attempts to get his comment.